

***Grace and Assurance: The Message of the Canons of Dordt***, by Martyn McGeown. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2018. Hardcover. 384 pages. [Reviewed by Jake Dykstra, a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church]

Nearly four hundred years separates us from the monumental event of the Synod of Dordt. It was there that our Reformed fathers took an unwavering stance on the scriptural principles that we know today as total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and preservation of the saints. Many members in the church of that day had been led astray by the heretical teachings of Jacob Arminius, whose doctrine was contradictory to every point established by the Synod. Lest these facts become lost in the chasm of history, the child of God does well to note that these same Arminian heresies threaten us today. Do you know what they are? Are you prepared to face them in the college classroom? What about when dealing with the family member from a different denomination? Rev. Martyn McGeown's book, *Grace and Assurance: The Message of the Canons of Dordt* serves as a simple guide to the document our fathers left us by God's grace.

Again and again throughout the history of the church, heresy has worked its way into the hearts of laity and theologian alike by means of confusing and ambiguous language, a point that Rev. McGeown brings out several times in his book. He uses many quotations used by the Arminians at the Synod of Dordt to prove their convoluted, contradictory, and confusing language. For example, the Arminian definition of election is exposed as "a general, indefinite decree of all men; and a particular, definite decree of some, which could be incomplete, revocable, non-decisive or conditional, or which could be complete, irrevocable, decisive or absolute." How's that for a brain scrambler? Rev. McGeown aptly reminds us that "the truth is much simpler than Arminianism." Each heresy is reviewed as set forth by the rejections of error in the Canons, and then proven false by the truth brought out in each article. His orderly and straightforward explanation of the Canons serves as a guide through the quagmire of Arminian heresy.

It is evident that considerable effort was put into this book to make it user-friendly, especially for young people. While *Grace and Assurance* does delve deeply into doctrines like election/reprobation and justification, it is done in a way that is digestible for anyone. Even long or obscure words are defined carefully so that the reader is not lost. Pointed questions are asked during and especially at the end of each chapter to give food for thought. As a young person myself, I found these questions to be very useful in ensuring that I was understanding the message of the Canons. Furthermore, many proof texts from scripture and other Reformed creeds are used to encourage

personal study.

The book's title is its theme. The message of God's grace and assurance cannot be missed. We are brought to ask ourselves "who are we that we should be chosen by God in distinction from others?" What cause for thanksgiving, that we may know that he has elected us, and that "even a child can understand" this great truth. Tremendous comfort is provided for those who lose a child in infancy, for those who doubt, for those who struggle with a particular sin. For all of God's people, young and old, need to hear that God has elected us, that he loves us, that he has saved us, and that he absolutely will bring us to dwell in heaven with him.

Perhaps you are new to the Reformed faith. Perhaps you have forgotten how comforting the proper understanding of God's grace and assurance can be. The Canons of Dordt, when properly understood, leaves the believer with no doubt regarding his eternal and unchangeable election. Maybe you are familiar with the Reformed faith but have no idea what the Canons of Dordt contain. In any case, this book will be useful to you. It is not difficult to read, whether you go from cover to cover or use it as a reference. By the grace of God, you will not be able to overlook the message contained in it: grace and assurance.